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WHAT IS THE

True Church of Christ?

IS THERE ONE OR MANY? WHAT IS THE CHURCH FOR? IS IT HUMAN OR DIVINE? IS IT THE KINGDOM? WHO CAN BELONG TO IT; ITS ORGANIZATION.

1. The Bible Is Our Only Source of Knowledge of the early Church, but is sufficient, and authoritative over all else.

2. Christ Foretells His Church, as to be founded on the great, underlying fact of His Divinity, just declared by Peter, in *Matt.* 16:13-18. So all history shows that it has been founded; hence no organization rejecting this fundamental truth can really be a church at all, and no other has any right to the sacred name.

3. It Was Born of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost (see *Acts* 2), using the first Christian sermon to convert 3,000 souls and to unite them in Christian love and fellowship. 5,000 more were quickly added (*Acts* 3 and 4:1-4), and growth was rapid by similar agencies for many decades.

4. Thus It Is a Divine and Not a Human Institution; and must be regarded and managed according to the divine principles and directions in the Word, not according to any ideas or wishes of men, as some would do. Yet because composed of and managed by human beings, it must always be subject to imperfections.

5. Its Purpose Is Chiefly Spiritual—to preach the Gospel and bring about the regeneration and building-up in Christian faith and character of every possible soul. Mighty results of good in every other department of life will result from these, but must always remain incidental objects, or the primary ones will fail. (See word-pictures of the Church in *I Tim.* 3:15, "pillar and ground of the truth;" *Eph.* 2:19, "household of God," or family;

Rev. 1:12 and 2:1-6, "candlestick," to shine forth the gospel truth; and, most important and expressive of all, *Eph.* 1:22-3, "the church, which is his body"—to speak the message and do the will of Christ, as our bodies express our wills and do our work;—see also *I Cor.* 12:12-27.)

6. Who Can Be Members? As a finger or foot must be a living part of the body, so every member of the spiritual Body of Christ must be a living part of Him by the New Birth from the Holy Spirit (*John* 3:1-18). Others may be voted in, but cannot be real members, being at best only like wooden arms or legs on a human body, without life or real connection; and such lifeless members are often the greatest hindrance to a church.

7. The Officers. The early Church had no organization for a long time. Then a need led to choosing deacons (*Acts* 6); in Acts 11:30 "elders" (older men) for local oversight are noted, being later called "bishops," meaning only "overseers." "Prophet" was another name for these preachers, as was "evangelists." The organization was thus extremely simple, a natural growth by the Spirit to meet the needs as they came, not at all mechanical, and nowhere definitely prescribed.

8. Its Doctrines Must always be just what Christ and His Apostles taught; to spread these was one of the great purposes, and to teach differently would be to contradict its Head! Holding these is essential for any officer; see *Tit.* 1:9.

9. The Church here is not the Kingdom. The latter is spiritual, comprising all who have really been born again, in both worlds; the local church is an effort to organize these in any locality.

10. Clearly there can be more than one such attempt, and thus more than one true local church, though all together are parts of the One Church Invisible, or Kingdom of God. Does the reader belong to the Church Invisible, the Kingdom of God? Only those who do will be saved. The entrance is by repentance and faith bringing the New Birth through the Holy Spirit. "Seek ye first the kingdom, and his righteousness." (*Matt.* 6:33.) "Seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you." (*Matt.* 7.7).

See futher about the church in the booklet "The Holy Spirit and His Wonderful works. The Utah Gospel Mission, Cleveland. Ohio.